

Manifest Destiny

MAIN IDEA

Through settlement and war, the United States greatly expanded its boundaries during the mid-1800s.

WHY IT MATTERS NOW

The actions Americans took during this period established the current borders of the 48 contiguous states.

Terms & Names

- manifest destiny
- Santa Fe Trail
- Oregon Trail
- Stephen F. Austin
- Texas Revolution
- the Alamo
- Sam Houston
- James K. Polk
- Republic of California
- Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo

One American's Story

In 1821, Stephen F. Austin led the first of several groups of American settlers to a fertile area along the Brazos River. Drawn by the promise of inexpensive land and economic opportunity, Austin established a colony of American settlers in Tejas, or Texas, then the northernmost province of the Mexican state of Coahuila. However, Austin's plans didn't work out as well as he had hoped; 12 years later, he found himself in a Mexican prison and his new homeland in an uproar. After his release, Austin spoke about the impending crisis between Texas and Mexico.

A PERSONAL VOICE STEPHEN F. AUSTIN

"Texas needs peace, and a local government; its inhabitants are farmers, and they need a calm and quiet life. . . . [But] my efforts to serve Texas involved me in the labyrinth of Mexican politics. I was arrested, and have suffered a long persecution and imprisonment. . . . I fully hoped to have found Texas at peace and in tranquillity, but regret to find it in commotion; all disorganized, all in anarchy, and threatened with immediate hostilities. . . . Can this state of things exist without precipitating the country into a war? I think it cannot."

—quoted in *Lone Star: A History of Texas and Texans*



Stephen F. Austin

Austin's prediction was correct. War did break out in Texas—twice. First, Texans rebelled against the Mexican government. Then, the United States went to war against Mexico over the boundaries of Texas. These conflicts were the climax of decades of competition over the western half of North America—a competition that involved the United States, Mexico, Native Americans, and various European nations. The end result of the competition would be U.S. control over a huge swath of the continent, from the Atlantic to the Pacific.

Settling the Frontier

As various presidents established policies in the early 19th century that expanded U.S. territory, American settlers pushed first into the Northwest Territory and then headed farther west.



AMERICANS PURSUE MANIFEST DESTINY For a quarter century after the War of 1812, only a few Americans explored the West. Then, in the 1840s, expansion fever gripped the country. Many Americans began to believe that their movement westward was predestined by God. The phrase “**manifest destiny**” expressed the belief that the United States was ordained to expand to the Pacific Ocean and into Mexican and Native American territory. Many Americans also believed that this destiny was manifest, or obvious and inevitable.

Most Americans had practical reasons for moving west. For settlers, the abundance of land was the greatest attraction. As the number of western settlers climbed, merchants and manufacturers followed, seeking new markets for their goods. Many Americans also trekked west because of personal economic problems in the East. The panic of 1837, for example, had disastrous consequences and convinced many Americans that they would be better off attempting a fresh start in the West. **A**

MAIN IDEA

Predicting Effects

A How might manifest destiny later affect U.S. relations with Native Americans?

TRAILS WEST The settlers and traders who made the trek west used a series of old Native American trails as well as new routes. One of the busiest routes was the **Santa Fe Trail**, which stretched 780 miles from Independence, Missouri, to Santa Fe in the Mexican province of New Mexico. (See map on page 132.) Each spring from 1821 through the 1860s, American traders loaded their covered wagons with goods and set off toward Santa Fe.

For about the first 150 miles, traders traveled individually. After that, fearing attacks by Native Americans, traders banded into organized groups of up to 100 wagons. Cooperation, though, came to an abrupt end when Santa Fe came into view. Traders raced off on their own as each tried to be the first to arrive. After a few days of trading, they loaded their wagons with goods, restocked their animals, and headed back to Missouri.

The **Oregon Trail** stretched from Independence, Missouri, to Oregon City, Oregon. It was blazed in 1836 by two Methodist missionaries named Marcus and Narcissa Whitman. By driving their wagon as far as Fort Boise (near present-day Boise, Idaho), they proved that wagons could travel on the Oregon Trail.

Following the Whitmans’ lead, many pioneers migrated west on the Oregon Trail. Some bought “prairie schooners,” wooden-wheeled wagons covered with sailcloth and pulled by oxen. Most walked, however, pushing handcarts loaded with a few precious possessions, food, and other supplies. The trip took months, even if all went well.

THE MORMON MIGRATION One group migrated westward along the Oregon Trail to escape persecution. These people were the Mormons, a religious community that would play a major role in the development of the West. Founded by Joseph Smith in upstate New York in 1827, the Mormon community moved to Ohio and then Illinois to escape persecution. After an anti-Mormon mob murdered Smith, a leader named Brigham Young urged the Mormons to move farther west. Thousands of believers walked to Nebraska, across Wyoming to the Rockies, and then southwest. In 1847, the Mormons stopped at the edge of the desert near the Great Salt Lake, in what is now Utah. Young boldly

Background

The Mormon religion was controversial for its belief in polygamy, a practice that allowed a man to have more than one wife.

HISTORICAL SPOTLIGHT



JIM BECKWOURTH
1798–1867?

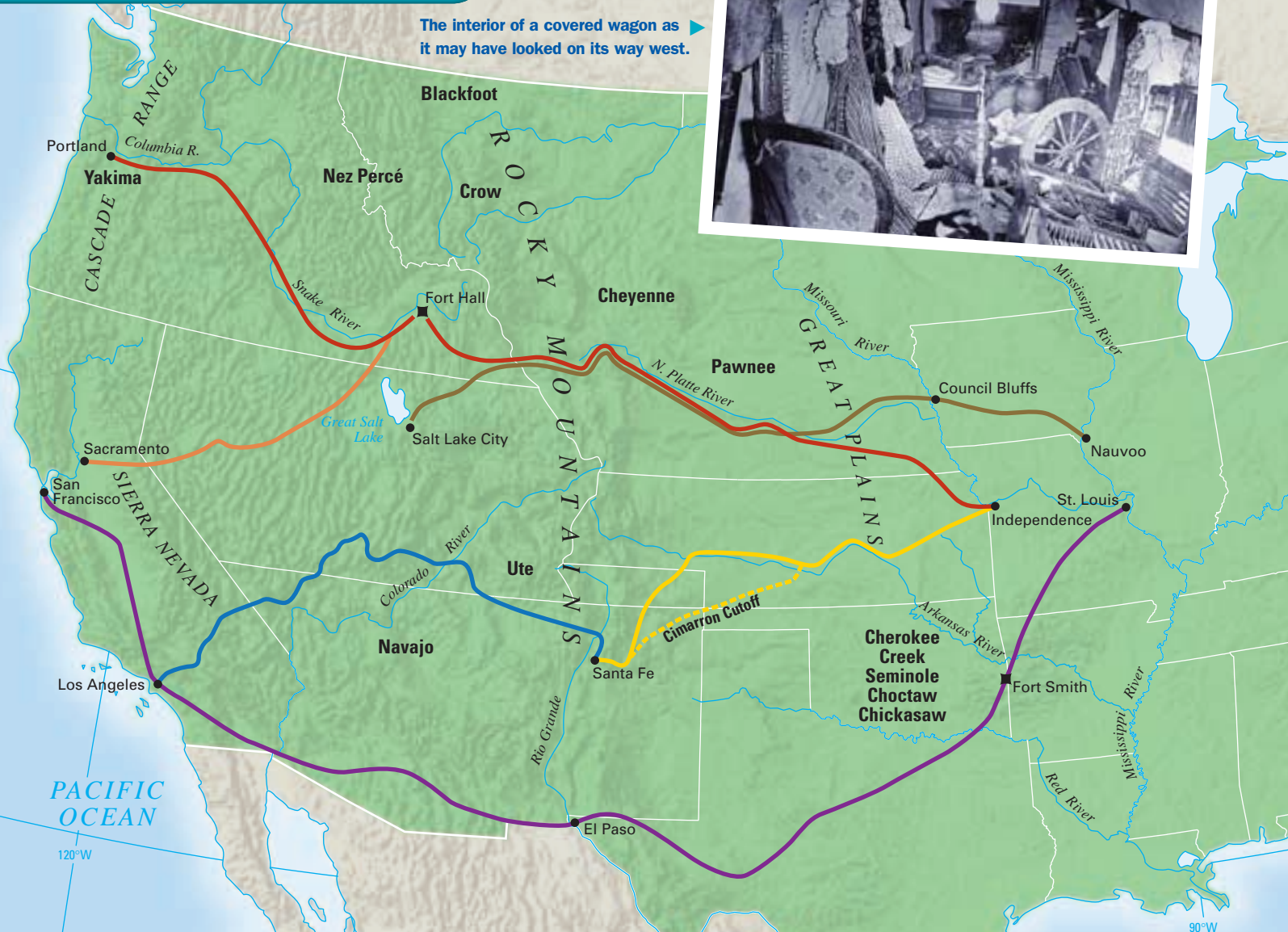
James Pierson Beckwourth (or Beckwirth) was the toughest kind of pioneer, a mountain man. The son of an African-American woman, he ventured westward with a fur-trading expedition in 1823 and found the place that would become his home for nearly the next quarter century—the Rocky Mountains. He greatly impressed the Crow, who gave him the name “Bloody Arm” because of his skill as a fighter.

Beckwourth served from 1837 until 1848 as an Army scout and trading-post operator. In 1848, he discovered a passage in the Sierra Nevada range that led to California’s Sacramento Valley and decided to settle down near the pass and become a rancher. “In the spring of 1852 I established myself in Beckwourth Valley, and finally found myself transformed into a hotel-keeper and chief of a trading-post.”

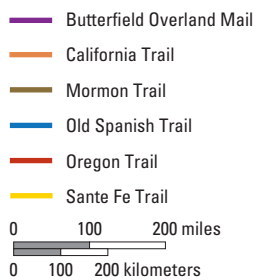


American Trails West, 1860

The interior of a covered wagon as it may have looked on its way west.

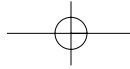


A Navajo man and woman in photographs taken by Edward S. Curtis.



GEOGRAPHY SKILLBUILDER

- 1. Region** Approximately how long was the trail from St. Louis to El Paso?
- 2. Movement** At a wagon train speed of 15 miles a day, about how long would that trip take?



MAIN IDEA

Analyzing Motives

B Why did the Mormons move farther west in their search for a new home?

declared, “This is the place.” Soon they had coaxed settlements and farms from the bleak landscape by irrigating their fields. Salt Lake City blossomed out of the land the Mormons called Deseret. **B**

SETTING BOUNDARIES In the early 1840s, Great Britain still claimed areas near the Canadian border in parts of what are now Maine and Minnesota. The Webster-Ashburton Treaty of 1842 settled these territorial disputes in the East and the Midwest, but the two nations merely continued the “joint occupation” of the Oregon Territory that they had first established in 1818. In 1846 the two countries agreed to extend the mainland boundary along the 49th parallel westward from the Rocky Mountains to Puget Sound, establishing the current boundary between the United States and Canada. Unfortunately, establishing the boundary in the Southwest with Mexico would not be so peaceful.

Texan Independence

After 300 years of Spanish rule, only a few thousand Mexican settlers had migrated to what is now Texas. After 1820, that changed as Texas became an important region in Mexico and then an independent republic.

MEXICAN INDEPENDENCE AND TEXAN LAND GRANTS The mission system used by Spain declined after Mexico had won independence from Spain in 1821. After freeing the missions from Spanish control, the Mexican government offered the surrounding lands to government officials and ranchers. To make the land more secure and stable, the Mexican government also encouraged Americans to settle in Texas.

Many Americans rushed at the chance to buy inexpensive land in Texas. The population of Anglo, or English-speaking, settlers from the United States soon surpassed the population of Tejanos, or Mexican settlers, who lived in Texas. Among the more prominent leaders of these American settlers was **Stephen F. Austin**. **C**

Austin’s father, Moses Austin, had received a land grant from Spain to establish a colony between the Brazos and Colorado rivers but died before he was able to carry out his plans. Stephen obtained permission, first from Spain and then from Mexico after it had won its independence, to carry out his father’s project. In 1821 he established a colony where “no drunkard, no gambler, no profane swearer, and no idler” would be allowed.

The main settlement of the colony was named San Felipe de Austin, in Stephen’s honor. By 1825, Austin had issued 297 land grants to the group that later became known as Texas’s Old Three Hundred. Each family received either 177 very inexpensive acres of farmland, or 4,428 acres for stock grazing, as well as a 10-year exemption from paying taxes. “I am convinced,” Austin said, “that I could take on fifteen hundred families as easily as three hundred if permitted to do so.” By 1830, there were more than 20,000 Americans in Texas.

THE TEXAS REVOLUTION Despite peaceful cooperation between Anglos and Tejanos, differences over cultural issues intensified between Anglos and the Mexican government. The overwhelmingly Protestant Anglo settlers spoke English instead of Spanish. Furthermore, many of the settlers were Southerners, who had brought slaves with them to Texas. Mexico, which had abolished slavery in 1829, insisted in vain that the Texans free their slaves.

Meanwhile, Mexican politics had become increasingly unstable. Austin had traveled to Mexico City late in 1833 to present petitions to Mexican president Antonio López de Santa Anna for greater self-government for Texas. While Austin was on his way home, Santa Anna had Austin imprisoned for inciting revolution. After Santa Anna suspended local powers in Texas and other

MAIN IDEA

Developing Historical Perspective

C Why did many Americans initially settle in Texas?



Mexican states, several rebellions broke out, including one that would be known as the **Texas Revolution**.

When Austin returned to Texas in 1835, he was convinced that war was its “only resource.” Determined to force Texas to obey Mexican law, Santa Anna marched his army toward San Antonio. At the same time, Austin and his followers issued a call for Texans to arm themselves. **D**

“REMEMBER THE ALAMO!” In San Antonio, the commander of the Anglo troops, Lieutenant Colonel William Travis, moved his men into **the Alamo**, a mission and fort in what is now San Antonio. Travis believed that maintaining control of the Alamo would prevent Santa Anna’s movement farther north.

From February 23, 1836, Santa Anna and his troops attacked the rebels holed up in the Alamo. On March 2, 1836, as the battle for the Alamo raged, Texans declared their independence from Mexico and quickly ratified a constitution based on that of the United States. The 13-day siege finally ended on March 6, 1836, when Mexican troops scaled the Alamo’s walls. All 187 U.S. defenders and hundreds of Mexicans died.

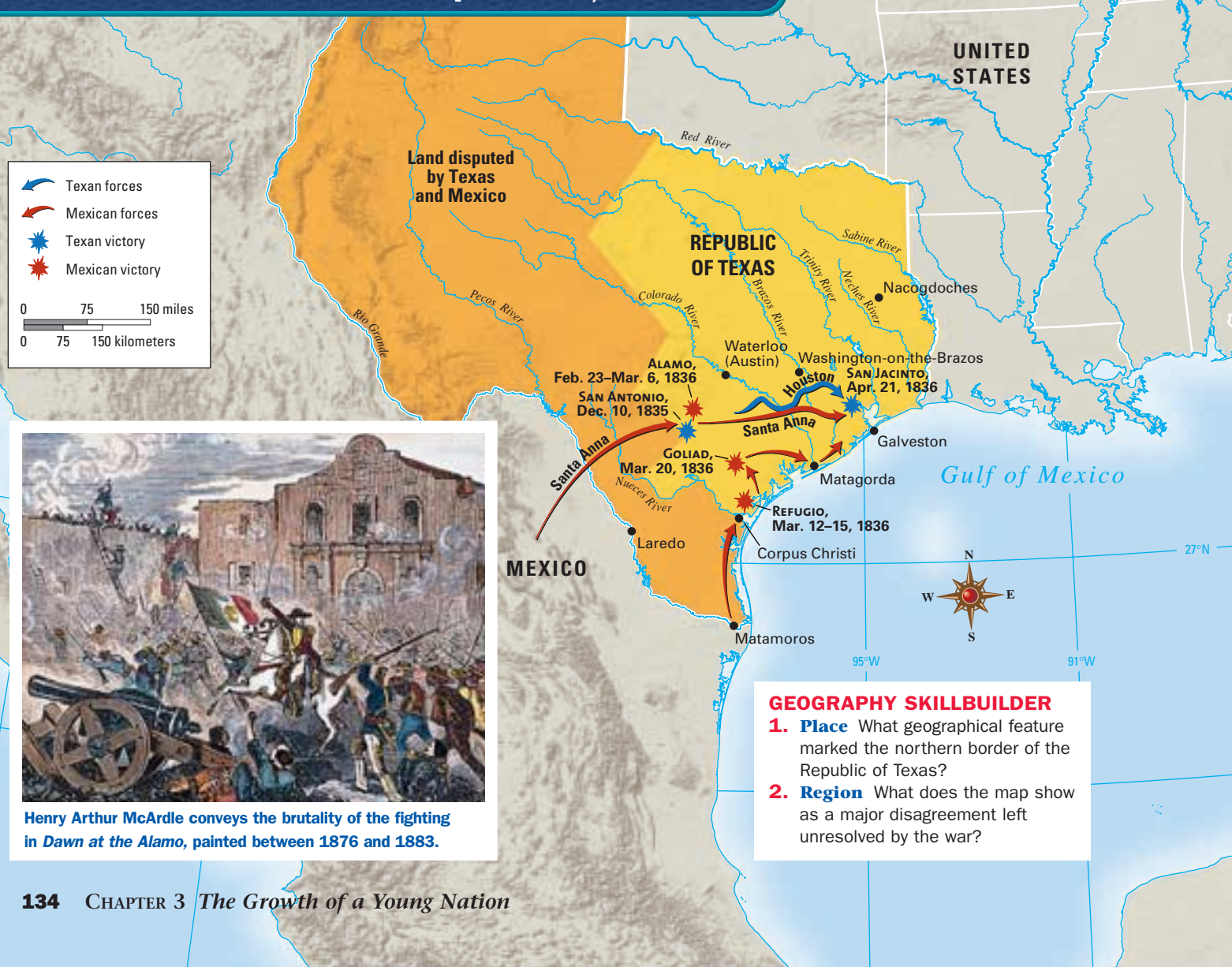
Later in March, Santa Anna’s troops executed 300 rebels at Goliad. The Alamo and the Goliad executions whipped the Texan rebels into a fury. Six weeks after the defeat at the Alamo, the rebels’ commander in chief, **Sam Houston**, and 900

MAIN IDEA

Analyzing Issues

D What disagreement led to the Texas Revolution?

War for Texas Independence, 1835–1836



Henry Arthur McArdle conveys the brutality of the fighting in *Dawn at the Alamo*, painted between 1876 and 1883.



KEY PLAYERS



SAM HOUSTON
1793–1863

Sam Houston ran away from home in Tennessee at about age 15 and lived for three years with the Cherokee. He later fought in the U.S. Army, studied law, was elected to Congress, and became governor of Tennessee.

In his memoirs Houston told of listening in vain for the signal guns indicating that the Alamo still stood. “I listened with an acuteness of sense which no man can understand whose hearing has not been sharpened by the teachings of the dwellers of the forest.”

The Republic of Texas chose Houston to be its first president. When Texas became a state, he was elected to the U.S. Senate.



SANTA ANNA
1785–1876

Antonio López de Santa Anna reportedly once said, “If I were God, I would wish to be more.” Santa Anna began his career fighting for Spain in the war over Mexican independence. Later, he switched sides to fight for Mexico.

Declaring himself the “Napoleon of the West,” Santa Anna took control of the government after Mexico won independence in 1821. He spent the next 35 years alternately serving as president, leading troops into battle, and living in exile. Santa Anna served as president of Mexico 11 times.

Santa Anna was a complex man with much charm. He sacrificed his considerable wealth to return again and again to the battlefield and died in poverty, almost forgotten.

soldiers surprised a group of Mexicans near the San Jacinto River. With shouts of “Remember the Alamo!” the Texans killed 630 of Santa Anna’s soldiers in 18 minutes and captured Santa Anna himself, who allegedly attempted to escape by dressing in a private’s uniform. The victorious Texans set Santa Anna free only after he signed the Treaty of Velasco, which granted independence to Texas. In September 1836, Sam Houston was elected president of the new Republic of Texas.

MAIN IDEA

Contrasting

E How would you contrast the Northern and Southern positions on the annexation of Texas?

TEXAS MOVES TOWARD THE UNION Most Texans hoped that the United States would annex their republic, but U.S. opinion divided along sectional lines. Southerners wanted Texas in order to extend slavery, which already had been established there. Northerners feared that the annexation of more slave territory would tip the uneasy balance in the Senate in favor of slave states—and prompt war with Mexico. **E**

The 1844 U.S. presidential campaign focused on westward expansion. The winner, **James K. Polk**, a slaveholder, firmly favored the annexation of Texas.

The War with Mexico

In March 1845, angered by U.S.-Texas negotiation on annexation, the Mexican government recalled its ambassador from Washington. On December 29, 1845, Texas entered the Union. Events moved quickly toward war.

POLK URGES WAR President Polk believed that war with Mexico would bring not only Texas into the Union, but also New Mexico and California. Hence, the president supported Texan claims in disputes with Mexico over the Texas-Mexico border. While Texas insisted that its southern border extended to the Rio Grande, Mexico maintained that Texas’s border stopped at the Nueces River, 100–150 miles northeast of the Rio Grande.

Despite the fact that Mexico had ceased formal diplomatic relations with the U.S., Polk hoped to negotiate secretly the boundary dispute, as well as the sale of California and New Mexico. He dispatched John Slidell, a congressman from Louisiana, to negotiate both matters. The Mexican government refused to receive Slidell. When Polk heard this news, he ordered U.S. troops into Mexican territory.



War with Mexico, 1846–1848



THE WAR BEGINS In 1845, John C. Frémont led an American military exploration party into California, violating Mexico's territorial rights. In response, Mexican troops crossed the Rio Grande. In a skirmish near Matamoras, Mexican soldiers killed 11 U.S. soldiers. Polk immediately called for war and Congress approved. **F**

In 1846, Polk ordered Colonel Stephen Kearny and his troops to march from Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, to Santa Fe, New Mexico. They were met there by a New Mexican contingent that included upper-class Mexicans who wanted to join the United States. New Mexico fell to the United States without a shot.

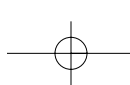
THE REPUBLIC OF CALIFORNIA In California, a group of American settlers seized the town of Sonoma in June 1846. Hoisting a flag that featured a grizzly bear, the rebels proudly declared their independence from Mexico and proclaimed the nation of the **Republic of California**. Kearny arrived from New Mexico and joined forces with Frémont and an American naval expedition. The Mexican troops quickly gave way, leaving U.S. forces in control of California.

AMERICA WINS THE WAR Meanwhile, American troops in Mexico, led by U.S. generals Zachary Taylor and Winfield Scott, scored one military victory after another. After about a year of fighting, Mexico conceded defeat. On February 2, 1848, the United States and Mexico signed the **Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo**. Mexico agreed to the Rio Grande as the border between Texas and Mexico and ceded the New Mexico and California territories to the United States. The United

MAIN IDEA

Analyzing Issues

F What border dispute affected the war with Mexico?



States agreed to pay \$15 million for the Mexican cession, which included present-day California, Nevada, New Mexico, Utah, most of Arizona, and parts of Colorado and Wyoming.

Five years later, in 1853, President Franklin Pierce authorized James Gadsden to pay Mexico an additional \$10 million for another piece of territory south of the Gila River in order to secure a southern railroad route to the Pacific Ocean. Along with the settlement of the Oregon boundary and the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, the Gadsden Purchase established the current borders of the contiguous 48 states.

The California Gold Rush

The United States quickly benefited from its new territories when gold was discovered at Sutter's Mill in the California Sierra Nevada mountains.

THE FORTY-NINERS On the cold clear morning of January 24, 1848, a carpenter named James Marshall discovered a few shiny particles lying near John Sutter's sawmill. Marshall took what he had found to Sutter, who confirmed the carpenter's suspicions: the particles were gold. Soon, more gold was found by other workers at Sutter's mill, and news of the chance discovery began to spread with lightning speed.

When the news reached San Francisco, virtually the whole town hustled to the Sacramento Valley to pan for gold. On June 6, 1848, Monterey's mayor, Walter Colton, sent a scout to report on what was happening. The scout returned on June 14 with news of gold, and the mayor described the scene that followed as news traveled along the town's main street.



▲ Goldminers at Spanish Flat, California, 1852

A PERSONAL VOICE WALTER COLTON

“The blacksmith dropped his hammer, the carpenter his plane, the mason his trowel, the farmer his sickle, the baker his loaf, and the tapster [bartender] his bottle. All were off for the mines. . . . I have only a community of women left, and a gang of prisoners, with here and there a soldier who will give his captain the slip at first chance. I don't blame the fellow a whit; seven dollars a month, while others [prospectors] are making two or three hundred a day!”

—quoted in *California: A Bicentennial History*

As gold fever traveled eastward, overland migration to California rose from 400 in 1848 to 44,000 in 1850. By the end of 1849, California's population exceeded 100,000, including Mexicans, free African-American miners, and slaves.

The rest of the world caught the fever as well. Among the so-called forty-niners—the prospectors who flocked to California in 1849 in the California gold rush—were people from Asia, South America, and Europe. In time, the names of



▲ Crowded buildings and a forest of masts stand out in this 1850 photograph of San Francisco.

the mining camps that sprung up in California reflected the diversity of its growing population: French Corral, Irish Creek, Chinese Camp. **G**

THE GOLDEN ECONOMY The discovery of gold revolutionized California's economy. Gold financed the development of farming, manufacturing, shipping, and banking. By 1855, more newspapers were published in San Francisco than in London, more books were published than in all the rest of the United States west of the Mississippi. Because of its location as a supply center, San Francisco became "a pandemonium of a city." Ships linked

California markets to the expanding markets of the rest of the United States.

Mining continued in California throughout the 1850s, but the peak of the gold rush was over by 1853. While most individual efforts yielded little or no profit, those who were able to use more sophisticated methods made fortunes. By 1857, ten years after James Marshall's discovery of a few shiny flakes, the total value of gold production in California approached two billion dollars. **H**

"GO WEST, YOUNG MAN!" Horace Greeley, editor of the *New York Tribune*, had declared in his paper prior to the gold rush that anyone who made the dangerous journey west was a fool. But when he heard of the discovery in the Sierra Nevadas his curiosity was aroused. Before long, he made the journey west himself and declared California to be "the new El Dorado." "Go west, young man!" Greeley advised. In the spirit of manifest destiny, countless settlers heeded his words in the decades that followed.

MAIN IDEA

Analyzing Effects

G In what ways did the gold rush change the population of California?

MAIN IDEA

Analyzing Effects

H How did the discovery of gold affect California's economy?



ASSESSMENT

1. TERMS & NAMES For each term or name, write a sentence explaining its significance.

- manifest destiny
- Santa Fe Trail
- Oregon Trail
- Stephen F. Austin
- Texas Revolution
- the Alamo
- Sam Houston
- James K. Polk
- Republic of California
- Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo

MAIN IDEA

2. TAKING NOTES

Draw a chart like the one below to show how the boundaries of the U.S. mainland were formed from the 1840s to 1853.

Year	Boundary Change
1845	Texas annexed

CRITICAL THINKING

3. ANALYZING ISSUES

What were the benefits and drawbacks of believing in manifest destiny? Use specific references to the section to support your response.

Think About:

- the growth of new cities and towns
- the impact on Native Americans
- the impact on the nation as a whole

4. EVALUATING

Would you have supported the war with Mexico? Why or why not? Explain your answer, including details from the chapter.

5. DEVELOPING HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

How did the California gold rush transform the West in the American imagination?